Initial Access to Validation of Programmes Leading to QQI Awards

Application Guide

QQI, an integrated agency for quality and qualifications in Ireland

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1. Background

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (hereafter the 2012 Act) established conditions that must be fulfilled before a provider may apply to QQI for validation of a programme of education and training. Programme validation by QQI is a two-stage process. The first stage, among other things, enables the statutory conditions to be fulfilled and the second stage is the application for validation of a specific programme(s) for awards made by QQI.

It is important for applicants to appreciate that QQI sets standards for awards. It does not develop programmes for, nor give learner assessment support to, providers. Providers seeking access to validation must take responsibility for the development, maintenance, provision and internal quality assurance (QA) of their own programmes and procedures for the assessment of learners enrolled on those programmes.

QQI quality assures the providers of programmes that it validates. Therefore, it must ensure that there is a minimum capacity in place before a provider may access programme validation. This capacity will depend for example on the award- type, NFQ level and field of education and training.

Providers may also provide accredited education and training with other awarding bodies.

To enable a provider to seek access to QQI validation of its programme, education and training must be a principal function of that provider. This does not mean however that it has to be the only function. Some large organisations have substantial training divisions which might have the capacity to become providers.

Programmes of education and training take place in a variety of contexts and for many purposes. Not all of them can or should be validated by QQI and not all require recognition within the NFQ.

1.1 Purpose of this guide

This guide to the application process will give providers of education and training information on the process that will be used by QQI to assess the capacity of applicants to offer education and training programmes leading to QQI awards.

Part 1 of the guide gives an overview of the process.

Part 2 of the guide gives guidelines to assist applicants to:

- prepare a self-assessment using the gap analysis tool
- complete the application form
- develop draft Quality Assurance procedures.

1.2 Relevant documentation

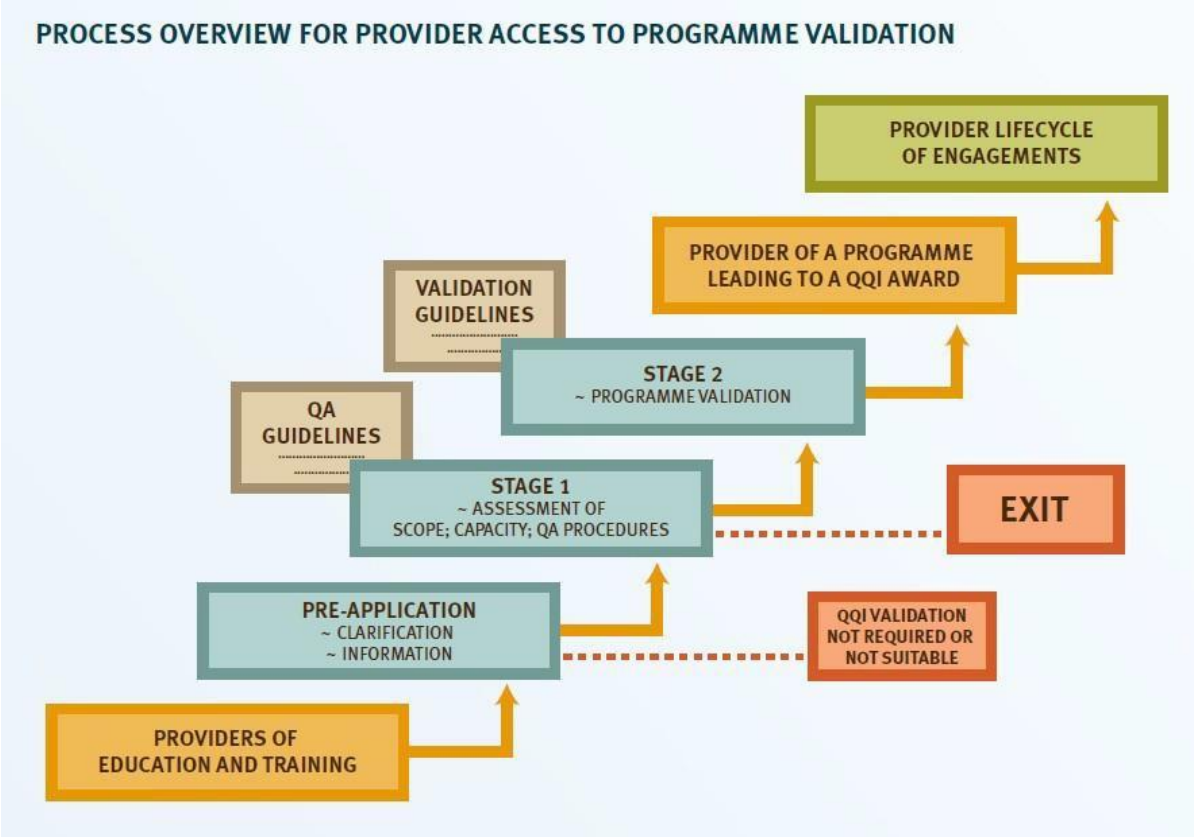
A range of essential and supporting documentation is available to providers i.e. policies and guidelines that will support applicants to meet the requirements of QQI. The documents listed below are available on www.QQI.ie in Initial Access to Programme Validation. Over time, QQI will add other documents that may help providers through this process.

2. Overview of the Process

The overview of the access to initial validation process includes:

- Role and responsibilities of QQI
- Applicant's role and responsibilities
- Timelines for completing the process.

Diagram of the Process



2.1 Principles of the process

The process is underpinned by the following principles:

- Commitment to making this process as fair, straightforward, transparent and consistent as possible.
- Adherence to agreed timelines.
- Effective provision of information (regular briefings will be provided about the policy and process). It is not possible or appropriate to provide training, on-going support or consultation services but meetings with providers to give information or clarification can be arranged at any time prior to an application being lodged.
- Confidentiality - QQI will treat all the information provided by an applicant as confidential in accordance with its Data Protection policy.

Note - QQI is subject to Freedom of Information legislation

2.2 QQI's responsibility

QQI is *committed* to providing an objective evaluation of each submission which will include the engagement of third party expertise.

QQI will *evaluate* each application on the basis of the scope of the provision that an applicant is proposing to offer and its capacity to offer quality assured education and training to learners seeking QQI awards to which the programmes lead.

QQI is *conscious* of the variety of education and training providers and their many operating contexts. The approach of QQI to evaluation of each application will be proportionate to the provider's operating context.

At all times, QQI reserves the right to seek additional information from applicants that it considers relevant to an application.

2.3 Applicant's responsibility

Providers seeking access to validation are responsible for the development, maintenance, provision and internal quality assurance (QA) of their own programmes and the procedures for the assessment of learners enrolled on those programmes. Therefore, there is a minimum capacity which must be in place before a provider may access programme validation.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure submission of sufficient evidence as proof of capacity to provide learners with a well-supported learning experience which allows them to achieve the learning outcomes for the award class and level of the QQI award sought.

3. Before deciding to apply

3.1 Pre-application engagement

Active participation in this phase is a compulsory part of the process. It will ensure that providers interested in applying for initial validation of a programme(s) will have every opportunity to be fully informed before committing to a formal application.

If the provider has not previously offered formally accredited programmes it is strongly recommended that it do substantial investigation as to the implications of seeking QQI validation. It is an important business decision and should not be taken lightly.

The investigation should entail, at a minimum, market research for the proposed programme(s) and discussions with providers of similar scale who already have QQI validation.

It is important to understand that building a system from scratch is difficult and requires many resources – human and financial.

3.2 How will a provider engage with QQI?

An interested provider submits an Expression of Interest through QHelp on https://qhelp.qqi.ie/providers/initial-access-to-programme-validation/- supplying the following information in the Comments box:

- Name of entity/organisation/college/group
- Contact details (telephone and email) and position of a contact person who will liaise with QQI
- Website details
- QQI awards it is proposing to offer - NFQ level and class of award.

Expressions of Interest are automatically acknowledged by return email and a Reference Number assigned.

Following the Expression of Interest, a provider will be invited to the next scheduled QQI briefing. These briefings will give information on the requirements of the process and commitments of a provider during its lifecycle engagement with QQI. There is no charge for these briefings.

An application for initial validation from a provider who has not attended a briefing will not be accepted.

3.3 How will QQI engage with interested providers?

It will be the responsibility of QQI to:

- Publish on its website the relevant application forms and guidelines required to make an application for initial validation.
- Send automatic email responses with a Reference Number which will be sent when an Expression of Interest is submitted. Queries are responded to in sequence within 5 working days. This response will give details of the briefing to which the provider will be invited.
- Arrange regular briefings. These briefings will be arranged to match the demand from providers. A provider who submits an Expression of Interest will be invited to a briefing to be held within one month (approximately) after the submission of an Expression of Interest.
- Make QQI staff available after each briefing to discuss a provider's individual circumstances. It is essential that providers are fully aware of all the implications of submitting a formal application for programme validation. Some providers, following a briefing and discussion, may decide that the submission of programmes for validation by QQI is not something they wish to pursue for a range of reasons.

4 The Process

Making an application to QQI is a two-stage process:
Stage 1 Assessment of capacity and approval of QA procedures
Stage 2 Programme validation

Applicants must be successful at Stage 1 before they can proceed to Stage 2. The applicant will, following attendance at a briefing:

- Notify QQI in advance of its intention to make an application.

Submit the following documentation in soft copy (to a QQI designated cloud folder) and hard copy (x 6 in separate ring binders)

- Application Form and supporting evidence
- Draft QA Procedures and supporting documentation

- Pay the appropriate fee:
  - The schedule of fees is published on the website
  - This fee is non-refundable

Note that only when all elements have been submitted will an application be considered complete. Incomplete applications or incorrectly completed applications will not be accepted and will be returned to the applicant.

4.1 Stage 1 - Role of QQI

The role of QQI will be to:

- Review all submitted documentation and screen each application to ensure that all the requested evidence has been submitted. Incomplete applications or incorrectly completed applications will be returned to the applicant by registered post. The applicant may resubmit within the timeframe provided. If re-submission is not received within this timeframe, the application is closed.
- Process applications only where the applicant has paid the appropriate fee.
- Acknowledge, with timelines for the completion of the process, to the applicant within 10 working days after a complete application is received. It is anticipated that Stage 1 will take a maximum of 25 weeks to complete.
- Establish a Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel to evaluate applications.

  The panel will be comprised of experts in governance, quality assurance and assessment in education and training. The panel membership and terms of reference will be published on www.QQI.ie
- Invite each applicant to an evaluation meeting with the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel.
- Make arrangements with applicants for a site visit (if required by the panel).
- Advise the applicant of the outcome of its Stage 1 application following a recommendation of the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel which will be considered under QQI's governance structures. Applicants will be informed no later than 21 days after the Approval and Review Committee meets.

4.2 The Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel

The Panel will:

- Meet as frequently as required to evaluate applicants' draft Quality Assurance procedures and their capacity to meet the capacity criteria set by QQI.
- Review all the documentation submitted by each applicant and any additional documentation prepared by QQI in relation to each application e.g. a report from a financial expert on the financial viability of an applicant based on the evidence submitted by the applicant.
- Meet each applicant to review its application and discuss the applicant's QA procedures. Four to six members of the panel will attend each evaluation meeting.
- Following the meeting with the panel, an applicant will be advised about a site visit - if recommended by the panel. This (where required) will normally be conducted in the 5 working days after the meeting with the panel.
- Following its evaluation of the application, make a recommendation to QQI

  about the approval of the applicant's QA and the scope of the provision it may submit for validation.
- If applicable, recommend a number of conditions that must be met by the applicant before a programme can be submitted for validation.

5. Outcome of Stage 1

5.1 What are the possible outcomes of Stage 1?

The outcome of the process is determined by the 2012 Act.

2012 Act para.30 deals with the outcome of the evaluation of QA procedures as follows:

(2) Upon consideration of the proposed procedures submitted to it under subsection (1), the Authority may

(a) approve the proposed procedures,

(b) refuse to approve the proposed procedures but make such recommendations to the provider as it thinks appropriate, or

(c) in accordance with section 31, refuse to approve the proposed procedures.

Successful outcome - Approval of QA procedures

If the applicant is successful at Stage 1 of the process, it may submit for validation of the programme(s) they have been approved to provide. Each applicant has up to a maximum of 6 months to submit the programme(s) for validation from the date of notification from QQI. If the programme(s) is not submitted within 6 months, the Stage 1 approval will lapse. Applicants will be required to make a new submission. The appropriate fee will apply.

Unsuccessful outcome - Non-approval of QA procedures with recommendations

Applicants who are refused approval with recommendations made by QQI, may resubmit their revised QA policies and procedures and additional evidence requested to demonstrate their capacity to meet the QA criteria by a date specified by QQI after the outcome has been notified to them. All the recommendations of QQI must be implemented in the resubmission. There is no fee charged for a resubmission. The Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel will evaluate the resubmission at its next scheduled meeting and make a recommendation to QQI. The outcome of that evaluation will be final i.e. Approval or Non-Approval.

Unsuccessful outcome - Refusal to approve QA procedures

Applicants who are refused approval of their draft QA procedures and who fail to demonstrate their capacity to meet the QA criteria will be notified in writing and the reasons given for the refusal. Such applicants may submit observations to QQI for consideration by the Approvals and Review Committee within a specified time period.

6. Stage 2 - Submission of Programme(s) for Validation

The applicant who is approved at Stage 1 of this process and is progressing to Stage 2 - the submission of programme(s) for initial validation leading to QQI awards will:

- Be required to attend a briefing on QQI validation requirements.
- Have a maximum of 6 months to submit a programme(s) for validation after approval at Stage 1.
- Only apply for validation for programmes which lie within the approved scope of provision decided at Stage 1.
- Pay the appropriate non-refundable fee for the validation of its programme(s).

  Evaluation will not commence until the fee is paid.

6.1 Role of QQI

- Arrange briefings for providers successful at Stage 1 on the Stage 2 process to inform them of the validation requirements in the context of the scope of provision they may apply to validate.
- Evaluate the submitted programme(s) according to the evaluation criteria for further or higher education and training - whichever is most appropriate to the scope of provision that has been approved at Stage 1.
- The evaluation will be undertaken by a panel of subject matter, industry and quality assurance experts appropriate to the programme. The number of evaluators will depend on the NFQ Level and complexity of the proposed programme. QQI will determine the number of evaluators assigned to each panel. A site visit / panel meeting will typically form part of this evaluation.
- The programme evaluators will make a recommendation to QQI about the programme(s) evaluated. They can also recommend conditions that must be met before approval and completion of the validation process.
- Following consideration of the evaluators' recommendation, QQI will inform the applicant of the outcome within a maximum of 25 weeks of the programme submission. Multiple submissions may take longer to process.
- Reports on the outcome of the process will be published on www.QQI.ie

7. Outcome of Stage 2 - Programme Validation

7.1 What is the outcome of Stage 2?

2012 Act para 45 deals with the outcome of the evaluation of programme validation:

> ***45***. *(1) Upon receipt of an application under section 44(5), the Authority may*
> *(a) subject to subsection (2), validate the relevant programme of education and training where the programme satisfies the criteria established by the Authority under section 44(1), or*
> *(b) refuse to validate the programme and give reasons for the refusal.*

7.2 Successful outcome - programme is validated by QQI

An applicant approved to offer a programme(s) leading to QQI awards will be committed to the lifecycle of providers engagements with QQI associated with programme validation: these include provision of information for learners, review and monitoring.

7.3 Unsuccessful outcome - programme validation is refused

An applicant who is refused validation for the programme(s) they have submitted may appeal the decision under the 2012 Act.

8. Timelines

QQI is aware that applicants will want an efficient process to enable them to have programme(s) validated within a reasonable time frame.

It is anticipated that Stage 1 will take a maximum of 25 weeks and Stage 2 will take a maximum of 25 weeks.

However, QQI will put in place measures to shorten that time frame where possible by:

- Arranging regular briefings for providers who express an interest in this process.
- Meeting the deadlines given on screening applications.
- Adding further meetings of Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel if more than those scheduled are required.
- Communicate with applicants to ensure they are kept informed of the progress of their application.

9. Stage 1 – how to make an application

The following are the steps for the Stage 1 process: (Ref. Process Flowchart on page 19)

1. The provider will review its resourcing, governance, quality assurance structures and procedures against current QQI guidelines / policies and will address any deficits identified. A Gap Analysis Tool is provided to assist in this process – see section 9.1 below. It may be used a number of times to check progress.
2. The provider will make an application to QQI comprising:
   - Completed Application Form and supporting documentation
   - Draft Quality Assurance Procedures
   - Fee
3. QQI will acknowledge and record receipt of the application and will screen it for completeness.
4. A panel will be established and drawn from the Quality and Capacity Evaluation main panel and comprising independent expert(s) with relevant experience and expertise.
5. QQI will confirm a date for the panel meeting with the provider. This may happen at the provider base or in QQI.
6. This panel meeting will entail a discussion between the panel and senior provider staff about the documentation supplied. The aim of the discussion will be to evaluate the appropriateness of the provider's resources, governance and draft quality assurance procedures with reference to:
   a. QQI QA Guidelines
   b. Provider context and capacity
   c. Provider's proposed scope of provision
7. Following the site visit, the panel will produce a report which will have one of the following possible recommendations set out in Section 5 above:
8. The Report will be sent to the provider for a factual accuracy check and observations.
9. The Report will be brought to QQI's Approvals and Review Committee (ARC) for decision. This committee is part of QQI's corporate governance.
10. QQI will notify the provider of the ARC's decision.
11. A provider may appeal an ARC decision not to approve the provider's quality assurance procedures using the statutory appeal process.
12. QQI will publish the ARC's decisions and the associated reports.

Providers whose quality assurance procedures are approved will publish the procedures on their own websites.

10 Building a quality assurance system

10.1 Overview

The whole purpose of the Stage 1 process is to provide confidence to QQI and, through QQI, to the rest of the education system and prospective learners, that a provider has the resources, governance and systems in place to successfully develop and deliver programmes which will be consistent with the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications.

Because a provider will be operating autonomously for the most part, it is critical that it can demonstrate the capacity to do so in a manner which will maintain the integrity of the awarding system. This requires clarity as to its responsibilities at every level of the operation as well as a governance system which will have sufficient objectivity to provide oversight and accountability for all significant decision making.

QQI provides guidelines for providers as to what their quality assurance systems should address, and these are an essential starting point for any potential provider. The guidelines are for all types of provider and need to be interpreted and localised by each provider to suit the type and scale of provision they intend to offer.

A provider's quality assurance system (policies, procedures, governance system) should be documented so as to be understood and used by the provider's staff and other stakeholders in the future. It should be possible to map the provider's procedures to QQI's Guidelines so that a panel will be able to see how and where a provider has documented approach to implementing a particular guideline.

This mapping should be made explicit in the application form as this is the way the panel will navigate through the documentation.

It is also really important to understand that the QA policies and procedures are not just an entry criterion for QQI, but will be critical for any new provider as they will provide the guidance and security for staff and learners that the right processes are being followed and the quality of programmes is being monitored.

10.2 What are quality assurance policies and procedures?

In this context, a policy will be a statement or series of statements which set out a provider's position and commitment(s) on a particular area of education and training provision. It should show that a provider is aware of its obligations in the area and is committing to deliver on these obligations.

A policy will:

- Be written for all stakeholders, internal and external and will have the primary purpose of informing
- Align with QQI Guidelines on QA
- Comply with QQI Policy and Criteria for Validation of Programmes
- Be available to all stakeholders e.g. on a website
- Have the understanding and backing of senior management
- Inform learners of what they should expect from the provider
- Inform staff of what is expected of them
- Provide a protection and support to provider staff in carrying out their work

A procedure will:

- Describe a process intended to deliver all or part of a policy commitment
- Be written to be available and understood by the people who will be operating the process or engaging with it
- Address the practicalities of the process – actions, forms, actors, timelines, information flows, records etc. be designed with the intention of delivering quality and consistency
- Be capable of being monitored i.e. records and / or indicators will be generated which should show if the procedure is being followed and, crucially, if it is effective
- Evolve over time as possible improvements are identified and implemented.

10.3 Monitoring and Review Systems

An essential element of a quality assurance system is the methodologies used to regularly monitor and review programme quality through:

- Stakeholder feedback (learners, staff and external)
- Ongoing checking of adherence to procedure and effectiveness of same
- Ongoing checking of adherence to programmes as validated
- Formal review of programmes – review procedures are an essential part of QA systems.

The products of monitoring and review should be available for internal and external oversight. Reports of formal self-assessments done as part of a review procedure should be published.

10.4 Quality Assurance Responsibilities and Structures

It is important that lines of responsibility for quality assurance and governance be clear. Where there are such roles, be individual or committee, it will be expected that purpose and responsibilities are clear and appropriate.

Where there are committees e.g. Academic Councils, Programme Boards, Advisory Boards etc, the following should be made explicit:

- Terms of reference
- Membership
- Frequency of meetings
- Reporting relationships

It is recommended that wherever possible, diagrammatic representations be used to show the layers of responsibility and reporting.

10.5 Where do I start?

If a prospective applicant to QQI is an existing provider offering programmes within the proposed scope of provision but accredited by another awarding body, it is likely that it will have at least some of the policies and procedures in place already. It should proceed to the Gap Analysis phase to identify what needs to be developed.

If, on the other hand, the applicant has not been offering formally accredited programmes it is strongly recommended that it do substantial research as to the implications of seeking QQI validation.

This should entail, at a minimum, market research for the proposed programme(s) and (ii) discussions with providers of similar scale who already have QQI validation.

It is important to understand that building a system from scratch is difficult and requires many resources – human and financial.

10.6 Gap Analysis Phase

To prepare for application, a provider is expected to do a gap analysis / self-assessment of its current resourcing and quality assurance relative to QQI capacity criteria and QA guidelines. The Gap Analysis Tool / Action Plan is designed to assist in this process. It asks a series of questions which are relevant to the conduct of providers offering nationally validated programmes. The applicant needs to be able to show that they have the resources, policies and procedures in place to be able to answer these questions or identify why the questions are not relevant to the provider's particular context.

Gap Analysis / Self-assessment involves collective reflection on questions important to the consistent and sustainable provision of programmes leading to nationally and internationally recognised qualifications with a view to identifying strengths and any areas which require attention.

Such reflection should then lead to work designed to fill any gaps and vulnerabilities identified. This may be followed by a further gap analysis phase(s) to incrementally identify and address issues.

These periods of gap analysis and development / updating of systems, processes and documentation will take time, effort and expense and this needs to be acknowledged.

When the provider feels that the self-assessment process has assured them that significant issues have been addressed and definite action plans are in place for other less critical issues, an application should be assembled.

11 The Application Form

The Initial Access Application Form comprises the sections listed below:

Section 1	*Provider Details and Profile*
Section 2	*Ownership, Management Structure and Control of the Provider*
Section 3	*Financial Viability and Resources*
Section 4	*Scope of Provision*
Section 5	*Statutory Declaration*
Report on provider self-assessment using Gap Analysis Tool	
Section 6	*Identification and mapping of documentation to capacity criteria*
Section 7	*Mapping of QA Procedures to relevant QQI Guidelines*

The application form should be completed electronically. A short explanation of the type of information requested is provided below, but further guidance is given in the form itself. The numbering (1.1, 1.2 etc) reflects that used in the form.

Section 1: Provider Details and Profile

This section provides up to date information about the provider in the following broad areas:

1.1 Name of legal entity applying

Note that the name of the legal entity may differ from the trading name(s).

Company Registration Number (CRO)

This a unique number given to all companies registered with the Irish Companies Registration Office.

Registered business/trading name(s)

An entity may have more than one registered business/trading name(s). List all registered business/trading name(s) the entity intends using. Indicate the business/trading name(s) that will be used when offering specific programmes leading to QQI awards.

1.2 Type of Legal Entity

The applicant shall be a clearly identifiable legal entity having rights and responsibilities under law, whether as a company, sole trader, partnership etc. properly constituted and registered, where appropriate, in accordance with the requirements of the Registrar of Companies, the Irish Revenue Commissioners and other relevant regulatory authorities.

Common types of legal entities are listed in the table below. Applicants must submit the appropriate evidence requested in the table below.

(Please note that further information/documents may be required).

Type of legal entity	Documentation that must be attached to **all** Application Forms: • Evidence of Registration with the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána (if applicable). • Evidence of Registration of Business Name(s) (RBN1s) for each trading name intended to be used by the applicant.
Limited company	Copy of Certificate of Incorporation. Current Memorandum and Articles of Association Current Company Printout from Companies Registration Office Ireland (CRO).
Sole trader	Copy of passport
Partnership	Copy of Partnership Agreement Certified list of all current partners
Other	If none of the above, please supply full details of the legal status of the applicant entity with copies of supporting documentation.

Section 2: Ownership, Management Structure and Corporate Governance of the provider organisation

2.1 Details of all persons who own / direct the organisation

QQI requires full disclosure of all persons who own/have a shareholding or a significant interest in the entity. These details should align with the details available from the Companies Registration Office. QQI is also seeking information on the extent of the involvement/role of the owner in relation to education and training provision.

The owner may, in some cases, be one of the key personnel/executive and responsible for many aspects of the entity's operations. In other cases, the owner(s) takes no part.

If there are more than three owners/shareholders, additional sections may be added. The purpose of this section is to provide QQI with accurate information regarding the ownership and management profile of the applicant provider.

2.2 Details of influential non-owners of the legal entity applying for initial validation

QQI is using the expression 'influential non-owners' to reflect the variety of roles that could exist in an entity that will influence aspects of the education and training provision.

Key personnel/executive, such as chief executive/director of studies/senior trainer/registrar, should be detailed here as should consultants working with the applicant.

If there are more than three influential persons within the organisation, please add his/her/their details.

2.3 Corporate Structure and Governance

Supply an organisation chart which shows the structure of the provider i.e. corporate governance structure(s), management and departments as appropriate.

2.4 Collaborative Relationships with other providers

QQI requires details on any relevant 3rd party collaborations and partnerships that will impact on any element of the education and training provided by the applicant. i.e., another provider with specific technical expertise/equipment may be contracted to provide elements of a programme.

Section 3: Financial Viability and Resources

3.1 Financial Resources

Applicants proposing to offer education and training programmes must provide assurances to QQI that they have the necessary financial resources to sustain the proposed programme. Financial resources can come from private or public sources. In some cases, it can be a mixture of both.

Applicants are required to provide sufficient documentation to QQI to establish their financial viability. One of the following should be submitted:

- Letter from the applicant provider's auditors, who must be members of and authorised to act as auditors under the Companies Acts by one of the Recognised Accountancy bodies that have been granted recognition for the purposes of section 187 of the Companies Act, 1990 (i.e. recognition to bodies of accountants for audit purposes) by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA), confirming that the applicant has audited accounts signed off for the last three financial years and is in conformance with Irish company law.
  QQI reserves the right to request copies of the last three years audited accounts where it is deemed appropriate.
- Confirmation from funding organisation(s) giving details of the funding arrangements.

QQI may engage with funding authority If funding is provided by public source i.e. an ETB, SOLAS etc.

3.2 Public Liability Insurance Details

QQI requires that providers have in place adequate public liability insurance in respect of their operations. A copy of the policy must be provided.

3.3 Current Tax Clearance Certificate

Please Attach copy of current certificate. Applications that do not provide a current tax clearance certificate will **not** be processed.

3.4 Compliance Statement

QQI requires providers to comply with all applicable law and regulation in Ireland. Examples include (but are not limited to) relevant legislation relating to financial management, equal opportunities, employment, data protection and health and safety.

Section 4: Scope of Provision - proposed programmes to be submitted for validation

4.1 QQI Validated Programmes

Scope of provision is defined by several parameters as set out in a table in the application form. It is critical to a proportionate evaluation of quality assurance procedures as it describes the breadth and depth of a provider's programmes and the range of factors which would need to be quality assured.

To specify the scope of provision, the applicant will complete the table with reference to the programmes the provider proposes to submit for validation if its Stage 1 application is approved. The highest and lowest NFQ levels and largest award classes should be identified. It is also important to identify the types of programme provision envisaged e.g. blended, collaborative, trans-national etc.

4.2 Non-QQI Awards offered

In this section the provider is asked to identify any programmes it currently offers which lead to recognised awards by awarding bodies, national or international, other than QQI.

Section 5: Statutory Declaration

QQI requires all applicants for re-engagement to complete a statutory declaration confirming that all the information supplied in the application form is accurate.

Sections 6 and 7 of the application form enable the applicant to communicate the findings of the final gap-analysis performed between:

- QQI organisational capacity criteria and provider documented evidence of meeting these criteria (Section 6).
- QQI QA guidelines and provider's documented QA procedures (Section 7).

Section 6 – Mapping of Application Documentation to Capacity Criteria

Section 6 lists the capacity criteria and, for each, asks the provider to record its assessment against the following headings:

Question	**What is required of provider**
Gap Analysis Satisfactory? (Y/N)?	In the provider's estimation does the gap analysis show that the criterion is met?
If not fully satisfactory, identify action(s) planned and date(s)	If the criterion is relevant and has not already been addressed, what actions are required and when will they be carried out?
Summary description of evidence / process	What documentary evidence / process is available to show that the criterion is addressed? A short description should be entered here.
Where evidenced (Document)	Identify which specific document in the application contains the evidence or details the process.
Page Number / Reference	Identify the specific reference or page number in the document where the evidence or process description can be found

Example:

Gap-analysis question	***Gap Analysis Satisfactory (Y/N)?***	***If not fully satisfactory, identify action(s) planned and date(s)***	***Summary description of evidence / process***	***Where evidenced (Document(s))***	***Page Number / Reference***
2.2a. Where is risk considered and managed within the organisation? Is there a risk register?	Y	N/A	The senior management maintain a risk register which is reviewed and updated at monthly meetings. Risk is a standing agenda item for the quarterly meetings of the E&T Governance Committee.	**QA Manual:** Corporate and Academic Risk Management procedure. Terms of Reference E&T Governance Committee	P27 -29 P17

It is important to complete the table for Section 6. If any of the criteria are not applicable, use the table to explain why this is so.

Section 7 – Mapping of Application Documentation to Capacity Criteria

Section 7 lists the gap-analysis tool questions pertaining to the provider's QA procedures and their consistency with QQI guidelines. The table is completed in the same way as in Section 6.

Question	What is required of provider
Gap Analysis Satisfactory? (Y/N)?	Does the gap analysis show that the question can be answered with reference to the provider's QA documentation?
If not fully satisfactory, identify action(s) planned and date(s)	If the question has not already been addressed in the QA documentation, address what actions are required and when will they be carried out?
Summary description of procedure / structure	What procedure / structure deals with this issue? A short description should be entered here.
QA Procedure (Document)	Identify which specific documents in the application details the procedure /structure.
Page Number / Reference	Identify the specific reference or page number in the document where the procedure can be found

How will QQI use the information contained in Sections 6 and 7?

Each applicant's application will be used by QQI and its panel of experts to:

(i) Ensure that the criteria and guidelines have been used by the provider in preparing the application.

Provide a mapping between the provider's application documentation and the criteria / guidelines against which the application is being compared.